

### Abstract of the Disclosure

Defects in the contour of a target object is detected by obtaining an digital  
variable-density image of the contour and edges are extracted from the image of the  
5 contour so as to sequentially represent the contour. Their directions are measured and the  
direction of each edge is compared with those of other edges selected according to their  
distances from the edge under consideration. The differential is indicative of the  
presence or absence of an indentation or a protrusion in the contour, representing a  
defect.

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